

DECORATIVE OUTDOOR CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application Serial Nos. 60/457,477, filed March 24, 2004, and 60/465,727, filed April 25, 2003, the entire content of both of which being incorporated herein by reference.

5

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to outdoor containment systems and, in particular, to decorative containment systems.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Those who have pets, particularly larger dogs, know that it can be problematic to 10 clean up after them. Particularly after several days, waste removal can become a chore, and there is currently no decorative way in which to store such materials until finally discarding them. There is also no decorative way to store garden tools or other accessories at a location convenient to use.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

15 This invention improves upon the existing art by providing a decorative outdoor containment system in the form a vessel disguised to look like a rock, plant or other landscape feature. The preferred embodiments include a base portion and a lid, enabling the user to store items during periods of non-use. The system may further include a garden hose contained in the vessel, and insulated walls may be provided to function as a 20 cooler to hold ice, drinks, or food. Alternatively, chemicals or other accessories may be stored for swimming pool use.

One particular embodiment comprises a pet waste clean up system including a vessel disguised to look like a natural or artificial product having a base portion and a lid,

enabling the user to accumulate pet waste until ultimate disposal. In all embodiments the vessel may be constructed to resemble a rock or boulder; a tree stump; a fire hydrant, a cactus or plant.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 FIGURE 1 shows a preferred embodiment of the invention;

FIGURE 2 is an exploded view of the embodiment of Figure 1;

FIGURE 3 shows an alternative embodiment providing the general appearance of a stump;

FIGURE 4 shows an alternative embodiment providing the general appearance of 10 a fire hydrant;

FIGURE 5 shows an alternative embodiment providing the general appearance of a cactus;

FIGURE 6 shows how, in all embodiments, a foot pedal and hinge lid may be provided to open and close the containment system; and

15 FIGURE 7 shows how, in all embodiments, at least some of the accessories, such as the scoop, may be available outside of the vessel.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

This invention improves upon existing approaches by providing a decorative container and optional accessories for pet clean-up and other uses. Reference is made to 20 the figures, Figure 1 in particular, which illustrates generally at 12 a preferred embodiment of the invention. In this case, the article takes the form of a rock, or boulder having a lower portion 14 and removable lid 16 separated by a seam 18. The item may be fabricated from any appropriate material or technique, though in the preferred embodiment, a plastic molding process is used with appropriate texturing to appear 25 natural.

Figure 2 shows the preferred embodiment of Figure 1 in an exploded view with the lid 16 being lifted up from the base 14. Various optional items such as a scoop, lined

container or additional plastic bags may be stored therewithin, enabling a user to accumulate pet waste until ultimate disposal. Closures or twist-ties may also be provided.

The invention need not take the form of a disguised rock, or the like, but may 5 assume other appropriate forms suited to disguise, such as the stump in Figure 3, or the fire hydrant shown in Figure 4, which respectively utilizes seam 38 and 48 to facilitate lid removal. In all embodiments, the optional devices shown with respect to Figure 2 may be included.

Figure 5 shows yet a further alternative embodiment of the invention, wherein the 10 vessel is disguised to look like a cactus, which may be more appropriate to pet owners residing in the southwest. Figure 6 shows how, in all embodiments, a foot pedal and hinge lid may be provided to open and close the vessel in much the same way as some laundry hampers and diaper pails operate; Figure 7 shows how, in all embodiments, at least some of the accessories, such as the scoop, may be available outside of the vessel as 15 opposed to being contained therein. Conveniently, the handle to the scoop may be disguised as a portion of the vessel, such as a branch extending from a trunk, and so forth.

Although the various embodiments and design have been described primarily with respect to pet maintenance, the structures are also applicable to other outdoor activities, including at least the following:

20 Storage of garden tools such as small shovels, gloves, weeders;
 Garden hose stowage
 A cooler to hold ice and drinks
 A storage vessel for chemicals and other swimming pool accessories.

I claim: